

REMARKS

Pending in the application are claims 2-6, of which claims 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are independent. The following comments address all stated grounds for rejection and place the presently pending claims, as identified above, in condition for allowance.

35 U.S.C. 102 Rejections

Applicants thank the Examiner for the close review of the claims and for indicating that claims 2, 3, 5 and 6 are allowed. Applicants traverse the rejection of claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being anticipated by Bosco (U.S. Patent Number 6,103,409), as the Bosco reference does not teach or suggest a cleaning mechanism in a fuel cell humidifying system for preventing clogging of a water permeable membrane in the humidifier, as recited in claim 4.

According to the Examiner, the Bosco reference describes a cleaning mechanism for a humidifier in column 1, lines 55-65. Applicants respectfully disagree. The Bosco reference describes a “membrane or filter type humidifier that humidifies a solid polymer membrane-electrolyte of a fuel cell” (emphasis added), which does not correspond to the cleaning mechanism of the present invention. The use of the term “filter” in the description of the humidifier does not suggest a capacity for cleaning the gas which passes therethrough, as alleged by the Examiner. Rather, the term “filter” refers to a *type* of humidifier, i.e., a humidifier in which a porous material may be used to transfer water to a reactant stream. The filter material is analogous to the water permeable membrane recited in claim 4, and is not a separate cleaning mechanism. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the use of the term “filter” to identify the type of humidifier used in the system of Bosco does not imply, disclose or suggest a cleaning mechanism for the humidifier.

Moreover, the Bosco reference lacks a teaching or even a suggestion of an actual mechanism for *cleaning* a gas passing through the humidifier. In fact, the Bosco reference does not mention that clogging of the humidifier is a problem, therefore, the Bosco reference cannot disclose cleaning mechanism for *preventing* clogging of a water permeable membrane.

For at least these reasons, the features of claim 4 are not disclosed and are not obvious from the Bosco reference. Therefore, claim 4 is patentable and the rejection should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 12-0080, under Order No. SIW-004 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

If there are any remaining issues or the Examiner believes that a telephone conversation with the Applicants' attorney would be helpful in expediting prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at (617) 227-7400.

Dated: November 10, 2003

Respectfully submitted,

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